



**A Healthier America Begins Today.**  
**Join the Movement!**  
**National Public Health Week**  
**April 2-8, 2012 • [www.nphw.org](http://www.nphw.org)**

January 1, 2012  
Dear Colleagues,

Every April since 1995, communities around the country have come together to celebrate National Public Health Week (NPHW). This year, with the recent release of the National Prevention Strategy, we will address the issue of prevention and wellness to ensure that all is being done to improve our nation's health.

This year, during NPHW 2012, we will focus on the theme: "A Healthier America Begins Today: Join the Movement." Each day of NPHW, we will discuss ways in which Americans can take preventive measures to live longer and healthier lives. Preventing disease before it begins is critical to reaching this goal, as well as to lowering the cost of health care. If we take small actions, our communities, homes and families will see the large benefits of preventive care and grow the movement.

Each year, chronic illnesses such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes are responsible for millions of premature deaths and cause Americans to miss 2.5 billion days of work, resulting in lost productivity totaling more than \$1 trillion.<sup>1</sup> With nearly 1 million Americans dying every year from diseases that could be prevented, even small preventive changes and initiatives can make a big difference in leading healthier lives. Preventive measures can help create a healthier America and can help us reach our goal of becoming the healthiest nation in just one generation.

In a given year, less than half of people diagnosed with a mental illness receive treatment. The unmet need for mental health services is greatest among underserved groups, including elderly people, racial/ethnic minorities, those with low incomes, those without health insurance, and residents of rural areas.<sup>2</sup>

Everyone has a role to play, and each action, no matter how small, can make a big difference in a community. You can help by raising awareness of prevention and wellness in your community during NPHW 2012 (April 2–8). Begin by observing this year's daily themes:

- **Monday: A healthier America begins with active living and healthy eating** — Promote healthy choices in your communities, such as bike lanes and farmer's markets.
- **Tuesday: A healthier America begins with living tobacco- and drug-free and preventing alcohol abuse** — Identify alcohol and drug use disorders early to reduce high-risk alcohol and drug consumption.
- **Wednesday: A healthier America begins with preventing communicable diseases** — Encourage proper hand-washing and food preparation habits.
- **Thursday: A healthier America begins with reproductive and sexual health** — Practice safe sex, encourage responsible contraception behavior and promote access to preventive health services.
- **Friday: A healthier America begins with mental and emotional well-being** — Refer people with signs of depression and suicidal thinking to appropriate resources and help centers.

Increasing awareness on how to use preventive measures to live longer and healthier lives is the first step in helping us create a healthier nation, but there is more you can do beyond taking these actions. We encourage you to use this toolkit to see that lifelong health starts not when a health problem arises, but through best practices, education and prevention. Thank you for helping APHA accomplish its goals. Each signed proclamation, public event and online message is another step in the right direction toward improving the health and well-being of our nation.

Sincerely,

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1 Kessler RC, Greenberg PE, Mickelson KD, Meneades LM, Wang PS. The effects of chronic medical conditions on work loss and work cutback. *J Occup Environ Med.* 2001;43: 218–225. 2

2 Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry.* 2005;62(6), 593-602.